

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EURE-00 NEA-10 CIAE-00 DODE-00
INR-07 NSAE-00 PA-02 PRS-01 SP-02 CAB-05 COME-00
DOTE-00 EB-08 FAA-00 MCT-01 /049 W
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P R 291307Z MAR 77
FM AMEMBASSY MADRID
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9561
USCINCEUR-ECAP
USNMR SHAPE
USINFO WASHDC
USIA WASHDC
INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

UNCLAS SECTION 1 OF 2 MADRID 2348

PASS IEU

SECSTATE FOR EUR/IB DURKEE

USIA FOR IOP/F MILLER

E.O. 11652: N/A
SUBJECT: TENERIFE AIR DISASTER

1. REPORTS AND EDITORIALS MARCH 28 AND 29 MADRID
PRESS BLAME TENERIFE AIR DISASTER ON "A MIXTURE
OF HUMAN ERROR, TECHNICAL DIFFICULTIES AND BAD
NATURAL CONDITIONS... AFTER THE EXPLOSION OF A BOMB
IN THE (AIRPORT) INSTALLATIONS OF LAS PALMAS..."
(DIARIO 16, MARCH 28).

2. DIARIO 16 (MODERATE LEFT SENSATIONALIST) EDITORIAL
CONTINUES: "THE STATE OF ALERT IN THE CONTROL
TOWERS...THE ORDER OF DETOUR OF THE AIRCRAFT, THE
PERSONAL DECISIONS OF THE PILOTS, THE WEATHER CONDITIONS
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AT THE TENERIFE FIELD, INTERNATIONALLY CONSIDERED AS
THE MOST DIFFICULT IN THE WORLD AND AN ENDLESS LIST
OF OTHER CIRCUMSTANCES, HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO THIS
HISTORIC RECORD THAT CAN ONLY BRING NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES
FOR OUR CIVIL AVIATION AND FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF
SPANISH TOURISM.

3. "THERE IS A POLITICAL ASPECT...THE TERRORIST CAMPAIGN LAUNCHED IN THE LAST FEW MONTHS BY THE SO-CALLED MOVEMENT FOR THE INDEPENDENCE OF THE CANARY ISLANDS... MUST COME TO AN END. IT IS INTOLERABLE THAT THE ALGERIAN AUTHORITIES LEND THE ANTENNAS OF THE NATIONAL RADIO OF ALGERIA SO RADIO FREE CANARIES EVERY NIGHT CAN LAUNCH ITS CALLS FOR ARMED STRUGGLE FROM THE MONTH OF (MOVEMENT LEADER ANTONIO) CUBILLO... WE BELIEVE THAT IF THE REGIME OF BOUMEDIENE DOES NOT TAKE EFFECTIVE AND URGENT MEASURES TO FINISH WITH THE LUNATIC CUBILLO, SPAIN SHOULD BREAK RELATIONS WITH SAID COUNTRY...

4. "FINALLY, THERE EXISTS ANOTHER IMPORTANT ASPECT... WE REFER TO...THE SITUATION OF CIVIL AIR CONTROL AND OF THE TECHNICAL INADEQUACY FOUND IN THE MAJORITY OF THE NATION'S AIRPORTS... THE PRESS HAS ALWAYS INSISTED THAT THE SITUATION COULD PRODUCE A CATASTROPHY: AND NOW WE HAVE THE CATASTROPHY."

5. INFORMACIONES (CENTER) OF MARCH 28: "THE TRAGEDY WAS PRODUCED AS A CONSEQUENCE OF A SERIES OF HAPPENSTANCES, WHOSE COINCIDENCE IN SPACE AND TIME MADE THE CATASTROPHY POSSIBLE. FIRST, THE TWO AIRCRAFT... WERE DETOURED TO TENERIFE BECAUSE OF THE EXPLOSION OF A BOMB -- FOR WHICH THE MOVEMENT FOR THE INDEPENDENCE OF THE CANARIES HAS CLAIMED RESPONSIBILITY -- IN THE GANDO (LAS PALMAS) AIR TERMINAL."

6. A SPECIAL INFORMACIONES COLUMN SAID: "THE CONNIVANCE UNCLASSIFIED

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OF THE ALGERIAN REGIME -- THE TERRORISTS HAVE THEIR BASE AND TRANSMITTER IN ALGERIA -- NEWLY ACQUIRES A SCANDALOUS CHARACTER... WITH THE DEATH OF THESE PERSONS, AND DEMANDS A SPANISH REPLY THAT SURPASSES THE LIMITS OF ROUTINE DIPLOMATIC PROTEST."

7. A THIRD INFORMACIONES ARTICLE REPORTS THAT "AN ERROR BY THE AMERICAN PILOT (WAS) THE APPARENT CAUSE...UNDER NORMAL CONDITIONS THE KLM WOULD HAVE TAKEN OFF WITH THE PAN AMERICAN CIRCLING AROUND TO THE HOLDING POINT... THE AMERICAN AIRCRAFT WOULD HAVE TAKEN OFF WHEN THE DUTCH WAS FAR AWAY AND AT A HIGH ALTITUDE. BUT THE PAN AMERICAN DID NOT CARRY OUT THE ORDERED MANEUVER, AND INSTEAD OF CIRCLING TO THE TURNING POINT---PERHAPS BECAUSE OF THE LIMITED VISIBILITY -- THE PILOT BELIEVED THAT HE HAD ARRIVED AT THE POINT AND ENTERED THE RUNWAY ON ONE OF THE (INTERMEDIATE) ACCESS RAMPS, PLACING HIMSELF SEVERAL HUNDRED METERS IN FRONT OF THE KLM, OUT OF VIEW OF THE DUTCH. THE CONTROL TOWER, BELIEVING

THAT THE AIRCRAFT HAD FOLLOWED INSTRUCTIONS, AUTHORIZED
THE TAKEOFF RUN OF THE KLM...ACCORDING TO THIS VERSION...
IT WAS A HUMAN ERROR, BUT OF THE AMERICAN PILOT, WHO
CONFUSED THE ACCESS RAMP...WITH THE ACCESS TO THE
RUNWAY HEAD."

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8. MARCH 29 ABC (DEMOCRATIC CONSERVATIVE) EDITORIAL:
"TO SPEAK AT THIS MOMENT OF THE CAUSES OF THIS TERRIBLE
TRAGEDY IS...PREMATURE...NOBODY WITH A SENSE OF
RESPONSIBILITY WOULD HAVE SENT THE TWO JUMBOS TO THIS
AIRPORT IF IT DID NOT MEET THE CONDITIONS FOR THEM.
NEITHER IS FOG A SUFFICIENT EXPLANATION...ONE MUST SUPPOSE,
TOO, THAT THE PILOTS OF BOTH AIRCRAFT...WERE EXPERIENCED,
ABSOLUTE PROFESSIONALS..."

9. MARCH 29 ARRIBA (CONSERVATIVE) EDITORIAL: "IF
MR. CUBILLO HAS CLAIMED RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE
TERRORIST ACT (LAS PALMAS BOMB), IT IS LOGICAL THAT THE
TENERIFE VICTIMS LIE UPON HIS SHOULDERS. THE SECOND
(CAUSE) IS THE CLIMATE CONDITION AT THE AIRPORT..."

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THE THIRD IS...THE TECHNICAL CONDITION OF THE AIRPORT... THAT HAS ON VARIOUS OCCASIONS BEEN DENOUNCED...AND THE FOURTH COULD BE, SIMPLY, HUMAN ERROR...THE SPANISH GOVERNMENT...HAS IN THE CASE OF THE MOVEMENT FOR THE INDEPENDENCE OF THE CANARIES A MORAL OBLIGATION TO OVERCOME THIS STUMBLING BLOCK WITH ALGERIA...AND AS FOR THE OTHER FACTORS, A COMPLETE EXPLANATION IS URGENT."

10. MARCH 29 EL PAIS (LEFT CENTER) EDITORIAL: "... VARIOUS INDICATORS POINT TOWARD AN ERROR BY THE PILOT OF THE AMERICAN CRAFT...THIS IS IN ANY CASE A CONCLUSION THAT THE PAN AM BLACK BOX WILL CLARIFY. NOW THEN WHAT DOES APPEAR...OUT OF ORDER IS TO ATTRIBUTE THE ACCIDENT TO...CUBILLO...THE CHIEF AND HIS GROUP HAVE PRACTICALLY NO ROOTS IN THE ISLANDS, AND THEIR CRIMINAL ACTION OF PLACING THE BOMB IN THE LAS PALMAS AIRPORT CANNOT TAKE ON THE SHAMEFUL INHERITANCE OF THE TENERIFE ACCIDENT. FULFILLMENT OF THE NORMS OF NONINTERVENTION...SHOULD BE DEMANDED OF THE ALGERIAN GOVERNMENT...BUT WE SHOULD NOT EXAGGERATE THE LIMITS OF THE QUESTION."

11. MARCH 29 YA (DEMOCRATIC CONSERVATIVE) EDITORIAL: "IT APPERAS CLEAR THAT WERE THE TERRORIST ATTACK... NOT TO HAVE OCCURRED, MAKING EVERYBODY NERVOUS AND FORCING A RAPID REORGANIZATION OF AIR TRAFFIC...THE CATASTROPHY WOULD NOT NOW BE ON THE FRONT PAGES OF THE WORLD PRESS...WITH THE MAXIMUM URGENCY WE BELIEVE THAT IT IS TIME THAT OUR GOVERNMENT MAKE THINGS CLEAR WITH ALGERIA, WHICH PROTECTS THE...TERRORIST MOVEMENT. THE SPANISH CITIZEN...IS PERFECTLY CONSCIOUS OF THE FARCE THAT IS SIGNIFIED BY CONTINUING TO SPEAK OF 'FRIENDSHIP' WITH A COUNTRY THAT CALMLY EGGS ON A MOVEMENT TO DISINTEGRATE SPANISH NATIONAL UNITY...WITH METHODS CONDEMNED BY ALL CIVILIZED COUNTRIES." EATON
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Message Attributes

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